

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the Abstract with the following replacement Abstract:

[0029] An axle assembly is provided having a varying wall thickness resulting in an axle assembly that is lightweight yet has sufficient strength and stiffness. An axle assembly comprising The axle assembly includes a tube disposed about a longitudinal axis and having first and second end portions and a center portion. ~~wherein the~~ The first and second end portions have a uniform wall thickness and the center portion has a wall thickness that is uniform at first and second axially spaced segments and a non-uniform wall thickness both between the axially spaced segments and between each of the axially spaced segments and the end portions.